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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2018

TAGS: PGOV KWBG EAID PTER IS

SUBJECT: GAZA PLC MEMBER DECRIMES RESIDENTS' SITUATION
AMIDST FEARS OF ISRAELI INVASION, CHRONIC SHORTAGES OF
BASIC SERVICES/GOODS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Gaza-based PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa (Independent) told PolOff by phone on June 9 that Hamas "feels weak and is afraid" but closures and economic woes have undercut moderates. She said Gaza suffers from "economic shutdown and general hopelessness" with almost no private vehicle traffic and sporadic electricity. She said collateral damage from Israeli strikes against Palestinian militants is widespread (including severe damage to her own home), and most Gaza residents expect a major IDF invasion soon. Akram Haniyah told the Consul General that President Abbas is concerned about the effects of an Israeli invasion and is studying "day-after" scenarios. End summary.

Hamas "Feels Weak" But Faces
No Credible Threats to Its Control

¶12. (C) Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa told PolOff June 9 that Hamas "feels weak and is afraid" based on her talks with Hamas' leaders (including former PM Ismayil Haniyah), but GOI-imposed closures and economic woes have undercut moderates and focused popular resentment on Israeli and American policies rather than Hamas' failings. She said Hamas leaders she has spoken with want a ceasefire with Israel to reduce the pressure on their organization, but will not surrender control of Gaza or change their basic objective to establish a Palestinian state by force.

"Economic Shutdown" in Gaza City

¶13. (C) Al-Shawwa said Gaza suffers from "economic shutdown and general hopelessness," with almost no private vehicle traffic in Gaza City and few buses or commercial trucks in operation due to lack of fuel. Most residents have eight hours of electricity daily (with limited loads that do not allow for air conditioning, water heaters or major appliances), leaving sunlight and candles as the principal sources of both light and heat.

Residents Believe IDF Invasion Imminent

¶14. (C) Most Gaza Strip residents, and especially those within a few kilometers of the perimeter fence, have directly experienced fighting between the IDF and Palestinian militants, al-Shawwa said, and expect fighting to escalate into a major IDF invasion soon. She sent PolOff pictures of severe damage to her own home in Gaza City's Shujai'ya neighborhood, caused by a tank round and large-caliber bullets the IDF fired at militants operating a few blocks away. Such damage is minor, she asserted, compared to that

of many residents on the outskirts of Rafah, Khan Yunis, Bayt Hanun and Shujai'ya, who are effectively homeless after IDF strikes toward militants destroyed their homes.

Akram Haniyah: Abbas "Very Worried" About Effects of Invasion, Studying the "Day After"

15. (C) Abbas confidant Akram Haniyah told the Consul General June 10 that President Abbas is "very worried" about the consequences of an IDF invasion of the Gaza Strip. Haniyah said part of his motivation for advocating PLO dialogue with Hamas (discussed septel) is "to give Hamas a chance to save Gaza and itself" from the destruction inherent in a major Israeli military operation. He said Abbas is already studying scenarios for the aftermath of an invasion, including proposals to station Arab peacekeepers inside the Strip.

WALLES